

THE CONTACTS OF THE INHABITANTS OF POLAND WITH HUNGARY IN THE LIGHT OF SURVEY STUDIES

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Introduction

The regional analysis of any kind of international contacts in Poland is not an easy task. The statistical data are most often available on the national level, less frequently in the setting of provinces, and only sporadically at the more detailed levels (counties, communes). The situation is even more difficult with respect to the study of social contacts with abroad on the personal level. The sole way of gathering information on the international connections of the citizens is constituted by the survey studies. Such a study was carried out in the year 2001 at the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization of the Polish Academy of Sciences, in the framework of the research project of the State Committee for Scientific Research, entitled "Regional differentiation of the socio-economic connections with abroad across the territory of Poland". The study was carried out in 33 towns of Poland (see Figs. ...). The selection of towns was purposeful. All the province capitals were taken in, along with one smaller town in each of the provinces, except for the capital province of Mazowieckie (Masovia), where two such smaller towns were selected. In view of the nature of selection we should emphasise that the study does not concern in a continuous manner the territory of the country, but only the concrete 33 urban centres. There were altogether 1314 respondents, who answered the questions of the survey questionnaire. The selection of the respondents had a mixed character. The survey was conducted in public places, with participation of persons formally residing in a given town, according to the division into genders and age groups (strata). The selection within the particular age groups of each of genders was random (objective). In the province capitals 50 questionnaires were to fill in, while in the remaining towns – 30.

The survey instrument was composed of 15 items. The groups of items concerned:

- the basic data of the respondent (the heading),
- the travels abroad of the respondents during the last five years (1996–2001),
- the maintenance of contacts with abroad via telecommunication (telephone, mail, electronic mail) during the last five years (1996–2001),

- the direct personal contacts with the citizens of other countries (family and friends abroad, hosting of foreigners at home during the last five years),
- the access to and the use of foreign language media (cable and satellite TV, internet, press), including the knowledge of foreign languages,
- the own assessment of the respondents as to the directions and intensity of foreign contacts of individual provinces.

The purpose of the present report is to analyse the survey material from the point of view of assessment of the Polish–Hungarian contacts at the personal level. The analysis omits the questions concerning the knowledge of languages and the access to foreign media, since the percentage of persons speaking Hungarian and taking advantage of the Hungarian mass media in Poland was next to null.

Travels to Hungary

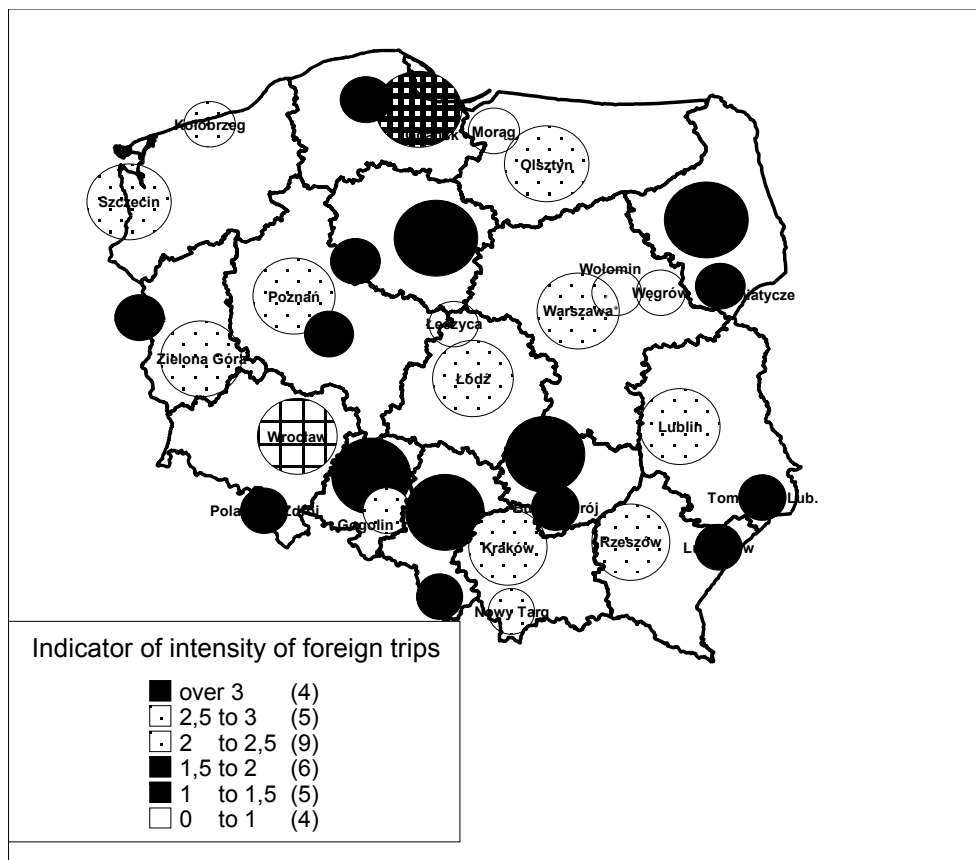
According to the data from the Border Guard Head Quarter, Poles went abroad in 2001 as many as 54 million times. A vast majority of these “foreign trips”, though, lasted just a couple of hours (shopping in Germany, tourist wandering along the border, including the mountains at the Polish-Slovak border). Thus, each and every Pole went abroad 1.4 times in 2001. Now, among the persons included in the study considered here, 55.6% were abroad at least once in the period 1996–2001. This share was perceptibly higher for the province capitals than for the small towns (60.1% and 48.5%, respectively). The respondents would decidedly most often travel during the last five years to Germany (28%). The subsequent ranks were occupied by Czech Republic (visited by 14.2% of respondents) and Slovakia (9.5%). The percentage shares of persons visiting France and Italy were also close to 10%. In case of Hungary it was 3.4% (4.0% for province capitals), similar like for Greece, Great Britain and Sweden, but definitely less than for Spain and Austria (however we should remember that in case of European Union countries some trips are connected with illegal work and in case of Hungary the real tourism is dominating). Thus, we can conclude that Hungary is still among the popular directions of travels in Poland. This is caused by the relatively small distance, tourist attractiveness of the country, long tradition, as well as the fact that some of the transit routes to the countries of Southern Europe pass through Hungary.

A simple indicator of intensity of foreign trips was constructed on the basis of the total number of trips and their frequency. The overall value of the indicator for the entire sample is 2.08 and it is higher for the inhabitants of the province capitals (2.31) than for the respondents from the smaller towns (1.72). The generally higher intensity of foreign trips is observed in the southwestern part of the country, and it decreases towards the East and Northeast (*see Figure 1*). The intensity of travels to

Hungary is distinctly related to the geographical distance from the border (*see Figure 2*). The belt of increased intensity encompasses the southeastern provinces: Podkarpackie, Małopolskie, Lubelskie, Śląskie (Upper Silesia), to then decrease both towards the West and the North of this area. It must be emphasised, though, that travelling to Hungary was often declared by the respondents from Warsaw, Łódź, Poznań and Wrocław.

Figure 1

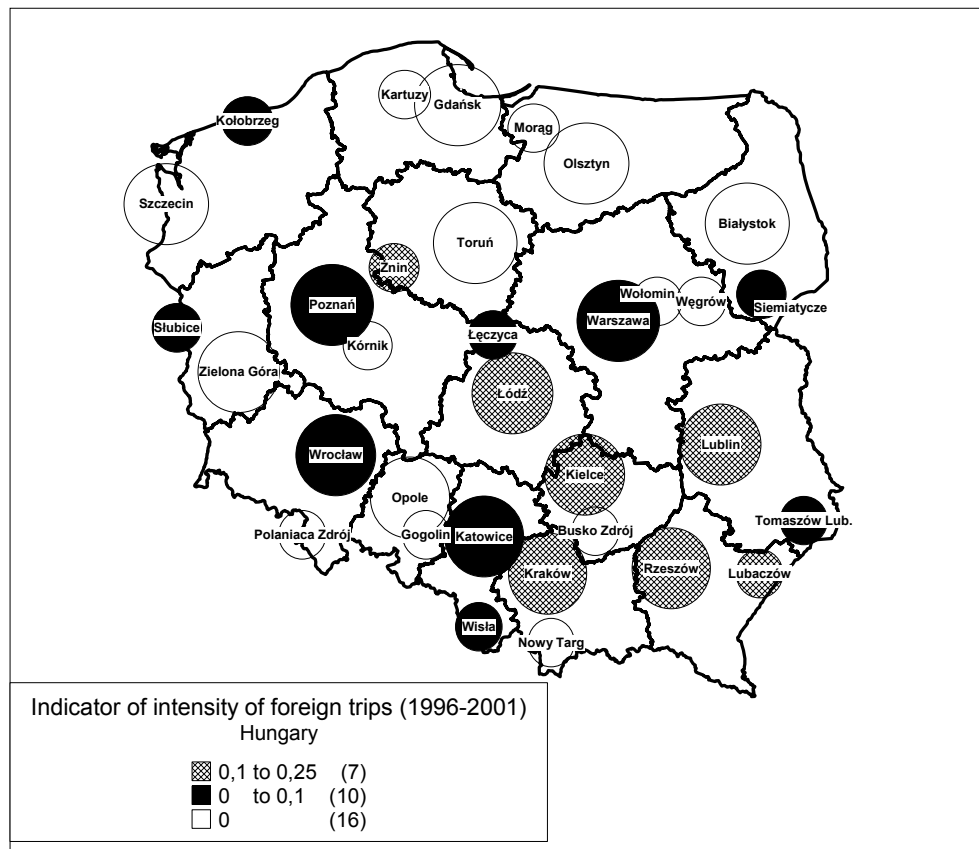
Intensity of foreign trip on the basis of survey



Source: own elaboration.

Figure 2

Intensity of trip to Hungary on the basis of survey



Source: own elaboration.

Contacts through communication channels

International contacts with the use of the communication media seem to have a special value from the point of view of relations of particular regions with abroad. These contacts are not, as this was the case of the trips, dependent upon the preferred tourist destinations. At the same time, in connection with the associated cost, such contacts are hardly incidental. There were three separate items in the questionnaire, which treated the frequency of the telephone talks, the posting of the

traditional mail, and the e-mails. A simple coefficient was constructed of the intensity of contacts with the (tele)communication media, W_i (encompassing all the three manners of communicating).

The average intensity of contacts through the communication media for the entire sample was $W_i = 3.06$, with the value being much higher for the voivodship capitals ($W_i=3.59$) than for the small towns ($W_i=2.23$). A similar role was played in the overall intensity of contacts maintained with the communication media by the telephone connections and the traditional mail (each of them accounting for roughly 40% of the entire result for the whole sample), while the significance of electronic mail was by half smaller (20%). In total, during the last five years, 46.2% of respondents made phone calls abroad, 40.9% of them sent letters abroad, and only 14.8% maintained electronic correspondence. Yet, the contacts with the use of the communication means with Hungary turned out to be very rare. The analogous percentages for this country correspond merely to 0.4%, 0.5% and 0.2%. In the regional setting a much higher significance of the traditional correspondence with Hungary was observed in Warsaw (4.0%) and Lublin (4.0%).

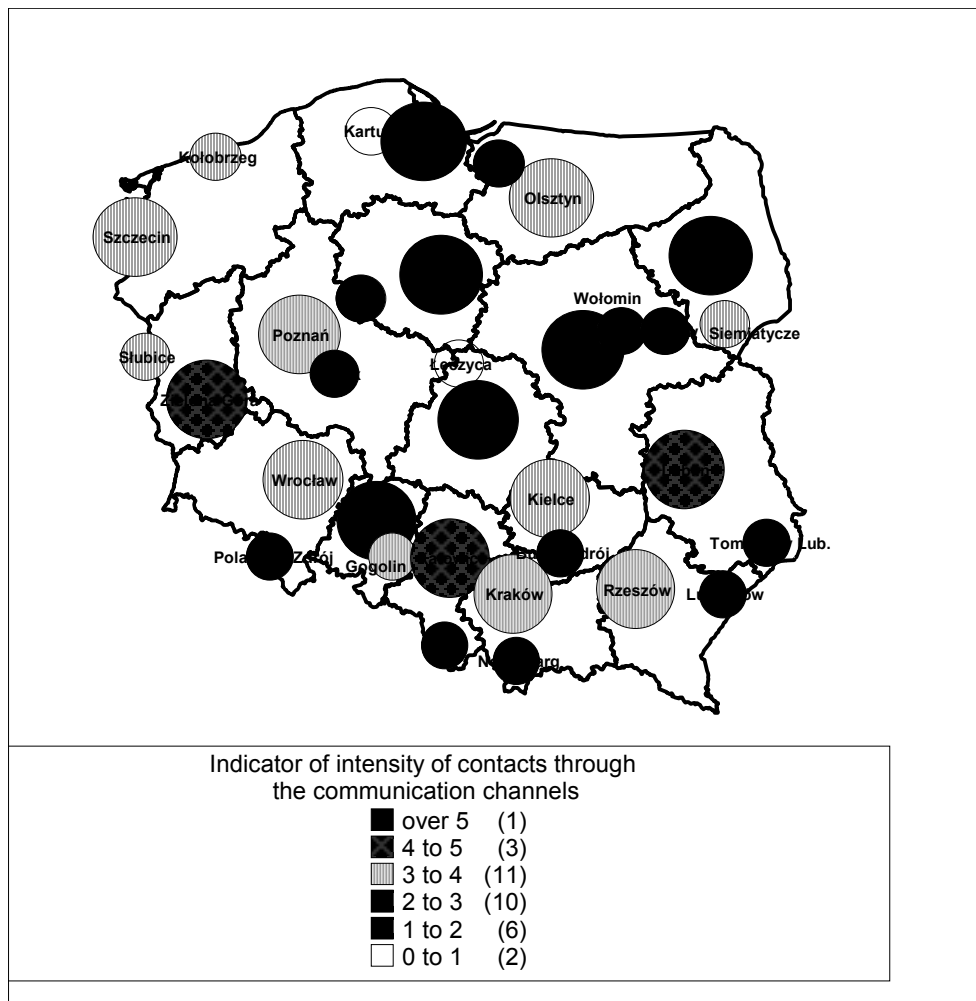
The summary index W_i , calculated for individual countries, was characterised on the countrywide scale by the distinct domination of Germany (as much as 0.9), followed by the United States (0.5). The subsequent positions in the ranking were occupied by the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Sweden, and Czech Republic. In the case of Hungary the value of the index was 0,02. This was similar as for Portugal and clearly less as for the down-under Australia. Generally the highest value of index W_i was observed in Warsaw and in the cities of South Poland (see *Figure 3*). In the Western part of the country the (tele)communication connections with Germany were strongest, in the Eastern one the position of United States was stronger. The connections with Hungary were noted only in Warsaw, Krakow and Lublin. They would not occur in other parts of the country.

Direct contacts

Hosting of the citizens of foreign countries at home is a far less frequent phenomenon than travelling abroad or the international phone calls. It is most often a proof of a close personal contact. It can also be the expression of the intensive economic ties, like, for instance, the contacts in the framework of the economic activity conducted at home (unofficial room renting), or the illegal employment of foreigners (mainly from Ukraine and Belarus). The scale of the latter two kinds of phenomena is indirectly illustrated by the fact that while the number of visits of foreigners in Poland in 2000 was roughly 84.5 million, only 3.5 million persons were accommodated in a hotel or another facility of this type. The other ones either stayed in Poland just a couple of hours, or were, exactly, hosted in private homes.

Figure 3

*International contacts through communication channels
 on the basis of survey*



Source: own elaboration.

There were 40.3% of respondents, who admitted having hosted at home foreigners during the last five years. On the scale of the entire sample the citizens of Germany are decidedly most often hosted (close to 20% of respondents had them as guests in their homes), followed by the citizens of the United States (5.3%). Relatively frequently the Russians (3.5%), British (3.0%), and Ukrainians (2.8%) are hosted as well. Now, it is surprising how rarely from among the neighbouring countries the citizens of Slovakia, Lithuania and Belarus' were hosted at home by the respondents. Only 0.6% of the respondents admitted having Hungarians as accommodated guests. This share, though, was much higher for Rzeszów (8.0%).

Poland was for decades a country of emigration. According to various estimates 8 to 15 million persons of Polish extraction live currently outside of Poland. The respective item of the survey instrument, though, dealt not just with family, but also with close acquaintances. The purpose was namely not to analyse the family ties of the Polish diaspora, but to identify all the strong personal ties, irrespective of their character. Close to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents stated that they have family or close acquaintances abroad. Decidedly the highest percentage shares of the respondents declared having family or acquaintances in Germany (33.1%) and in the United States (24.7%). The third rank was occupied by Canada (6.5%), followed by France, United Kingdom, Sweden, Italy, and Australia. Again, a surprise was constituted by the low numbers of persons admitting of having such close personal ties in all the neighbouring countries except for Germany. Also in the case of Hungary this was just 0.5%.

The assessment of contacts with Hungary

The respondents were also asked to provide their own, subjective assessment of the intensity of the socio-economic contacts of their voivodship with other countries. They would indicate the countries, with which the region of their residence had *very strong*, *strong* or at least *medium strong* relations. A simple indicator of the perceived intensity of contacts (W_{PNK}) was constructed on the basis of their responses. The decidedly highest values of the indicator W_{PNK} are noted for the perception of contacts with Germany (the average for all the respondents in the sample as high as 0.999). The ties with Hungary were paid attention to almost exclusively in two bigger centres located relatively closer to this country, that is – in Rzeszów and Lublin. The existence of connections with Hungary was practically not suggested by anybody from North and Western part of Poland.

Summary

On the basis of the general analysis of the entire survey material the primary factors were distinguished conditioning the geographical differentiation of the international connections at the personal level. These factors are as follows:

- geographical distance,
- historical connections,
- earlier migration flows,
- spatial distribution of ethnic minorities,
- distribution of the economic activities, including foreign investments,
- incomes of the population (conditioning not only foreign trips, but also international phone calls).

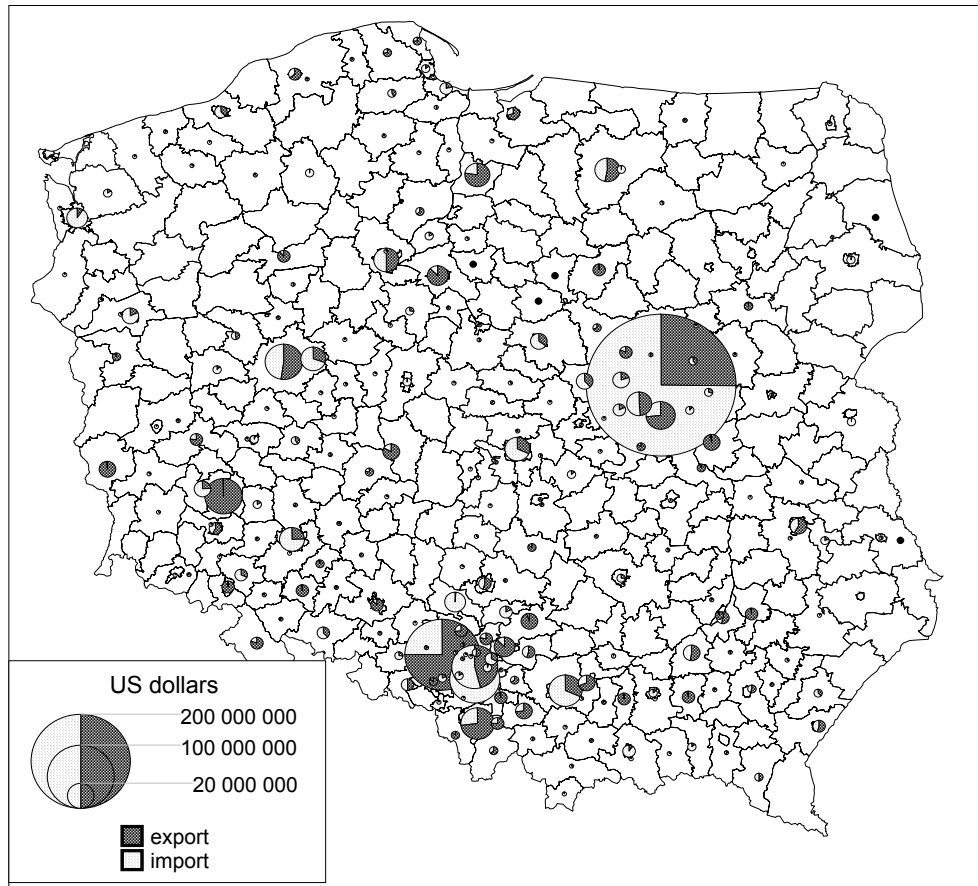
It appears that with respect to the personal contacts with Hungary the factors of geographical distance and incomes of the population are decisive. In the second case the dependence, however, is not linear. Since the basis for the bilateral contacts is constituted by tourism, we must remember that the travels to Hungary are often undertaken by the persons of relatively lower incomes (Hungarian camping is often one of the cheapest of the ways of spending vacation time abroad).

A definite significance for the distribution of the bilateral ties must also be assigned to the spatial pattern of economic activity. This is demonstrated by the partial similarity of the spatial distribution of the centres featuring stronger contacts and the distribution of the Polish-Hungarian trade (*Komornicki, 2000*), *Figure 4* (first of all the case of Warsaw, Kraków and Lublin).

As mentioned already, it should be considered that the basis for the personal contacts of the Polish citizens with Hungary is constituted by outbound tourism. This tourist movement involves the persons from the entire country, first of all, though, from the South-eastern Poland (region closest to Hungarian territory). A clearly less pronounced role is played by the contacts associated with economic ties. The latter concern mainly Kraków, southern Poland in general, and Warsaw. There is, on the other hand, an almost complete lack of the “family” ties (except for Rzeszów).

Figure 4

Polish-Hungarian trade exchange in the year 2000



Source: own elaboration on the basis of the Foreign Trade Information Centre in Warsaw.

References

- Turystyka w 2000 (Tourism in the year 2000), 2000, GUS, Warszawa.
- Komornicki, T. 2000: Potoki towarowe polskiego handlu zagranicznego a międzynarodowe powiązania transportowe (Commercial commodities flows of Polish foreign trade and international transport connections), *Prace Geograficzne* Nr 177, IGiPZ, Warszawa.